

REMARKS

This is in response to the non-final Official Action currently outstanding with respect to the above-identified Request for Continued Examination application.

Claims 1-8 were present in this application as of the time of the issuance of the currently outstanding Official Action. Claims 1-8 currently stand rejected by the Examiner on substantive grounds. Applicants respectfully request the entry of the foregoing Amendment of Claim 1 so as to place this application in condition for allowance. In addition, Applicants propose that Claims 2 and 5-7 be canceled, without prejudice. No new claims are to be added, nor are any claims proposed to be withdrawn by the foregoing Amendment. Accordingly, upon the entry of the foregoing Amendment, Claims 1, 3, 4 and 8 as hereinabove amended will constitute the claims under active prosecution in this application.

The claims of this application as they will stand upon the entry of the foregoing Amendment are reproduced above including appropriate status identifiers and showing the Amendments sought as required by the Rules.

More specifically, it is noted that in the currently outstanding Official Action, the Examiner has:

1. Acknowledge Applicants' claim for foreign priority under 35 USC §119(a)-(d), and confirmed that the required certified copies of the priority document have been received by the United States Patent and Trademark Office.
2. Indicated that the formal drawings filed on 20 June 2006 have been accepted
3. Acknowledged the receipt and consideration of Applicants' most recent Information Disclosure Statement of 20 June 2008 (presumably meaning 2006) – **Similar acknowledgement of the Information Disclosure Statement filed in this application on 8 January 2010 is respectfully requested.**

4. Provided Applicants with a Notice of References cited (Form PTO-892).

5. Rejected Claims 1-7 under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over Nishi (US Published Patent Application No. 2003/164934) in view of Akira (Published Japanese Application 2001-118913)

6. Rejected Claim 8 under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over Nishi (US Published Patent Application No. 2003/164934) in view of Akira (Published Japanese Application 2001-118913) further in view of Norihiko (Japanese Published Patent Application 2000-147528).

Further comment regarding items 1-4 above is not considered to be necessary in these Remarks.

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's thorough examination of the subject application and respectfully request reconsideration of the subject application based on the foregoing amendments and the following Remarks.

With respect to items 5 and 6 above, Applicant respectfully submits that U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2003/0164934 ("Nishi") shows that circular trenches are formed on a stage in a concentric pattern, and further that one pressure sensor is provided in one air discharge path connected to each of the adsorption ports.

Contrary to the just mentioned structure, the present invention has a feature that the leak trenches are formed in a grid pattern in the region of the adsorption face of the stage, the adsorption ports are formed at centers of regions surrounded by the leak trenches formed in the grid pattern, respectively, and the pressure detecting means is provided in the air discharge path for each of the adsorption ports. In this regard, we believe that Nishi should be distinguished from the present invention.

More specifically, Applicant respectfully submits that Nishi's device merely detects whether an adsorption failure occurs on the stage. As far as Applicant is aware, however, the Nishi device cannot detect the location of the adsorption failure. Therefore, it is difficult for the Nishi device to detect the location of the adsorption failure even if the cause of the adsorption failure is the foreign particle existing on the stage, and to remove the foreign particle to surely adsorb the substrate.

By contrast, Applicant respectfully calls attention to the fact that the present invention has a feature that the leak trenches are formed in a grid pattern in the region of the adsorption face of the stage such that the adsorption ports are provided in each region surrounded by the leak trenches, and the pressure detecting means is provided in the air discharge path for each of the adsorption ports. Therefore, if a foreign particle is present between an adsorption face and a substrate, that foreign particle is disposed in any of the regions surrounded by the leak trenches. Furthermore, the gap between the adsorption face and the substrate generated in the vicinity of the foreign particle communicates with the leak trenches in the vicinity of the gap and the adsorption port of the region. The latter configuration enables the pressure detecting means corresponding to the adsorption port to detect a region where the foreign particle is disposed. As a result, the present invention has a significant advantage in that the location of the foreign particle can be specified accurately, and the foreign particle on the adsorption face can be easily removed.

Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that neither Nishi nor Akira teaches or suggests the subject matter of the present invention, i.e., "the leak trenches are formed in a grid pattern in the region of the adsorption face of the stage, the adsorption ports are provided in each region surrounded by the leak trenches, and the pressure detecting means is provided in the air discharge path for each of the adsorption ports."

Therefore, entry of the foregoing Amendment, reconsideration and allowance of this application in response to this submission are respectfully requested.

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Applicants believe that additional fees are not required in connection with the consideration of this response to the currently outstanding Official Action. However, if for any reason a fee is required, a fee paid is inadequate or credit is owed for any excess fee paid, you are hereby authorized and requested to charge and/or credit Deposit Account No. **04-1105**, as necessary, for the correct payment of all fees which may be due in connection with the filing and consideration of this communication.

Respectfully submitted,

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SIGNATURE OF PRACTITIONER

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